



**Department of Health**

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TTY: 711  
[www.health.ri.gov](http://www.health.ri.gov)

November 19, 2010

Dear Healthcare Provider,

The Rhode Island Department of Health (HEALTH) wants healthcare providers to be aware of a new protocol for sickle cell testing. Both the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) and the National Athletic Trainers' Association (NATA) have recommended sickle cell trait testing for Division I athletes to reduce the incidence of training-related deaths. As such, the NCAA Division I Legislative Council now requires that all incoming Division I student athletes be tested for sickle cell trait, provide documentation of a prior test, or sign a waiver releasing their institution from all liability if they refuse testing. This new ruling applies to student athletes who are beginning their initial season of eligibility and to students who are trying out for a team.

As you know, Rhode Island began reporting newborn screening results electronically in the late 1990s. HEALTH does not expect providers to have access to sickle cell trait test results for most current student athletes born in Rhode Island. **HEALTH recommends that providers refer student athletes born before 1999 for hemoglobin electrophoresis testing to determine if they are carriers of the sickle cell gene.** The test can be performed at a clinical laboratory with a physician's order.

If you have any questions about this new protocol, please feel free to contact Christelle Larose in the Newborn Screening Program at 401-222-5950. To learn more about the NCAA sickle cell protocol, please visit [www.ncaa.org](http://www.ncaa.org)

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Gifford'.

David R. Gifford, MD, MPH  
Director of Health